

At a roundtable convened by U.S. Congressman Allen Boyd (D-North Florida) today in Tampa, leading representatives of Florida's agriculture industry spoke with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack about the progress the industry has made in overcoming recent hardships, the important role Florida's agriculture sector plays in the global food supply, and how the federal government can continue to support Florida farmers.

Boyd's roundtable marked the first time Secretary Vilsack has visited Florida since being named as head of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The discussion covered a wide range of topics - including sustainable crops, pest and disease management, as well as environmental concerns and credit and market issues - and featured commentary from leading agriculture experts and trade associations representing Florida's varied agriculture industry.

"Florida's agriculture economy is not only a great source of pride for our state, but collectively it supplies countless local jobs in our communities and makes invaluable contributions to our country's food supply," said Congressman Boyd, a member of the House Agriculture Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations. "Florida farmers have braved and overcome a number of challenges in recent years, and I believe this forum helped lay the foundation for a long and productive collaboration together. I commend the Secretary's commitment to continue working with our farmers in the upcoming Farm Bill."

"USDA and the Obama administration are working to create jobs across Florida and strengthen the state's vibrant agriculture economy so it continues to act as a cornerstone of prosperity in rural communities," said Sec. Vilsack. "I appreciated the opportunity to hear from a diverse group of producers about the challenges they face, and about how USDA's work to support farmers and ranchers is creating new income opportunities around the state, helping provide our nation with its food supply, and offering important environmental benefits to Florida's communities."

The roundtable featured remarks by Congressman Boyd, Congresswoman Kathy Castor and Secretary Vilsack and was designed to be an opportunity for Florida's agriculture community to make the Secretary aware of the state's specific concerns and identify ways the U.S. Department of Agriculture can better support Florida farmers.

This event was held at the University of South Florida in Tampa to accommodate Secretary Vilsack's schedule.

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